

# Memorandum

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**bject :** **RIO LINDA/ELVERTA POWER PROJECT (01-AFC-1)**  
**STATUS REPORT #2**

## Data Response and Issues Workshop

A data response and issues workshop was conducted on July 17, and continued on July 18, 2001. Staff received responses to many of the data requests by the due date of June 18. Staff received other responses on July 16. The applicant stated in the last group of data responses that additional responses would be received on or before July 27. Additional responses have not been received at this time. No intervenors actively participated in the workshops on either July 17 or 18.

The applicant was notified by a letter on July 16, that all of the information that staff has asked for in data requests is needed to complete the Preliminary Staff Assessment (PSA) and eventually the Final Staff Assessment (FSA). The applicant was further reminded that staff currently has insufficient information to fully assess the project. Without this information, staff may not be able to recommend certification.

Staff is working to set up a meeting with the Water District and its legal counsel to review the proposed scope of work and the associated budget submitted to the Commission for reimbursement. This estimate describes part of the work, that the water district proposes to perform in order to supply water to the project. Staff will be performing some of the Water District's proposed scope of work in its own analysis.

However, staff attempted to schedule a workshop on August 7. The applicant asked that the workshop be delayed. The applicant further stated (by phone call on July 26) that in reflecting on the results of the workshops conducted on July 17 and 18; it is working on an Application for Certification (AFC) supplement. Staff suggested to the applicant that the workshop go forward since many of the water data requests were not answered. Staff is concerned that there is insufficient data for an appropriate PSA/FSA analysis.

The applicant stated that it would ask for a project delay in the first week of August. Therefore the water workshop will be delayed. However, given the pending changes in the project and the lack of water data available to the applicant, it is more appropriate to suspend the project rather than delay it. Once the applicant files a request to delay the schedule staff will provide a response.

## **Progress on Significant Issues**

On June 4, 2001, the Project Committee issued its scheduling order directing that the Preliminary Staff Assessment (PSA) be filed in mid-late September 2001. Staff is diligently working to meet the schedule despite gaps in the information provided in the AFC.

In the Issues Identification Report filed by staff on May 4, 2001, staff identified three issues. They were Air Quality, Visual Resources, and Water Resources. In further project evaluation, staff has added Biological Resources; Noise; Land Use; and Worker Safety and Fire Protection. Below is a status of each of these issue areas.

Air Quality: There have been changes to the cooling/ condenser system. These were brought to staff's attention in the Visual Resources data responses. According to the applicant, the changes were made to lessen visible plumes. Instead of the 10-cell back-to-back cooling tower originally proposed for the project, the applicant is changing to an in-line 10-cell plume abated cooling tower. This increased the height of the top of the cooling towers approximately 10% to 55 ft. The change may affect air dispersion modeling, noise, visual resources, and perhaps water usage. Staff still needs the Application for Certification (AFC) supplemental filings with a more detailed description of these and other changes, which may have been made to the rest of the system. Significant system design changes impact more than one area of analysis. This almost always requires an AFC supplement.

Biological Resources: The applicant has completed biological surveys on the proposed water supply line, however, the water supply line remains highly speculative. The water district maintains that the wells were selected by the applicant, not the water district. The applicant did not supply biological survey information for the Hedge-Proctor (SMUD's) 3.4-mile segment to be reconductored as a result of the project. However, the applicant stated that it has completed the surveys and will supply the findings to staff.

Staff believes that project groundwater consumption will also cause a decrease in flows in the Sacramento and American Rivers. These decreases could contribute to the cumulative declines in river flows, which may adversely impact endangered and sensitive species.

Land Use: No progress to report. LeighAnn Moffat, County Planner attended the July 17 workshop. She addressed some of the concerns of the citizens. Some participants questioned the proposed location of the project, and suggested that McClellan AFB would be a better site for the project. The applicant responded that the current site was chosen because the Energy Commission had previously approved it and that it was close to the Western substation.

Noise: The applicant indicates that the cooling tower system is being redesigned. It may impact the noise analysis, however, staff has not received this new information.

Visual Resources: Data responses received by staff on July 16 indicate a change in views due to the cooling tower redesign. (These responses were received on July 16, approximately one month past the response due date). This was the first time that staff had seen any landscaping plans. However, the applicant stated in its filing that staff would receive additional visual responses on or before 27 July. At this time, staff has not received those additional data responses. Members of the public voiced concerns of how the proposed power plant would impact the pastoral setting and their property values.

Worker Safety and Fire Protection: No progress to report. However, the public expressed concerns about the adequacy of the fire protection plan as described in the AFC.

Water and Soil Resources: As stated above, the locations of the proposed wells and water supply pipeline are in dispute. Staff explained to the applicant that most of the water resources data requests were not satisfactorily answered in the data responses. Staff primarily requested either information needed to evaluate the technical basis of conclusions regarding project impacts or project-specific impact analyses that were not included in the AFC. In some cases, the applicant failed to give technically relevant responses stating instead economic or other reasons for not having answered the technical aspects of the questions. Staff plans to file a motion to compel the applicant to respond to data requests in the near future.

### **Public Comments from the Workshop**

Most of the stated concerns by people in attendance at the workshop dealt with water supply and flood control. Many residents in the communities of Rio Linda and Elverta depend on individual private wells for their water supply. (According to the November 2000 Rio Linda/Elverta Community Water District Water Master Plan, there are about 1000 private wells, which provides about 3000 acre-feet/year, serving about 3,200 people and about 760 agricultural acres. The District serves about 13,100 people with about 3,400 acre-feet/year.)

Referencing a recent District environmental impact document, members of the public stated that they are expecting 25% of private wells to go dry (that is independent of the proposed project). People in the community are concerned that pumping for the project will accelerate and increase the loss of local groundwater wells.

The public questioned why the project could not use surface water or degraded water from McClellan AFB instead of groundwater. The public also expressed concern that

the project pumping would cause degradation of the groundwater quality from migration of the McClellan contaminant plume and from excavation and construction activities.

Several participants discussed the flooding of local roads and portions of the proposed plant site. Their concerns focused on access to the site during emergencies and the potential for construction and proposed drainage changes to exacerbate flooding in the surrounding area. Sorrento Road, the plant's only planned access was said to flood nearly every year. The applicant's response was, " then we will elevate the road." The public response was, "Where will you divert the water?"

The public also expressed concerns regarding soil impacts. There were questions regarding whether vibrations from the plant will cause soils' liquefaction or subsidence. There were concerns that construction would cause increases or changes in sheet flow and runoff from the site. There were comments that during the rainy season disrupted soils produced deep mud, which made the roads hazardous.

cc: Rio Linda/Elverta Power Project Proof of Service list